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SUBJECT: SUDAN - IOM OVERVIEW OF IDP RETURNS

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. (U) The International Organization for Migration (IOM), the primary operational agency in the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to Southern Sudan, recently provided a breakdown of projected IDP returns and an overview of current operations. Although establishing the logistical infrastructure for large-scale population movements has faced some delays to date, IOM now has a solid structure and strategy in place and is optimistic that it will meet its 83,000 return target by the end of the dry season in early ¶2008. However, Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) commitments to assist 115,000 returns from Khartoum in 2007 may be overly ambitious. IOM's flexible approach also allows for the expedited movement of IDP groups of special concern, often critical to mitigate ethnic tensions and diffuse inter-communal conflict.

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PLANNING FIGURES  
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¶2. (U) IOM has committed to assist in the return of 83,000 people to and within Southern Sudan in 2007 and early 2008. The breakdown by region and area of origin is as follows:

- 35,000 from Khartoum to Southern Kordofan and Southern Sudan (including 10,000 by air to Central, Eastern, and Western Equatoria states
- 15,000 within Blue Nile
- 10,000 from Wau town, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, to Warab State
- 10,000 from all three Equatoria states to Upper Nile
- 13,000 from South Darfur to Northern Bahr el Ghazal

¶3. (U) The GOSS also plans to assist 115,000 IDPs to return from Khartoum to Southern Kordofan and Southern Sudan in 2007. Combined with IOM's 35,000, the overall planning figure of IDPs returning from Khartoum in 2007 and early 2008 is 150,000. IOM will provide some support to GOSS in its efforts as GOSS fleet management capacity is limited.

¶4. (U) In addition to assisted IDP returns, IOM estimates that there could be up to 300,000 spontaneous IDP returns and 102,000

refugees repatriating to Sudan in 2007.

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PROGRESS TO DATE  
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¶5. (U) The most significant obstacle to date has been establishing basic infrastructure for large-scale returns. However, IOM recently completed departure centers in two of the main IDP camps in Khartoum and will complete an additional facility in the coming month.

¶6. (U) IOM estimates that 230 trucks are required to complete transportation of the planned number of IDPs within the year. IOM currently owns only 30 trucks but is able to hire additional vehicles and reports that trucking capacity is not delaying return operations. In addition, GOSS will provide IOM 134 new trucks for the movement of the 115,000 people from Khartoum that the GOSS has committed to assisting.

¶7. (U) IOM-assisted movements from Wau to Warab have started, as well as the assisted return of long-term IDPs from the Equatoria states to Upper Nile and Jonglei. Also underway are the IOM-assisted returns of Dinka IDPs from South Darfur to Northern Bahr el Ghazal.

¶8. (U) While its planning figures reflect calendar year 2007 (largely to fit donor funding cycles), IOM stressed that the primary window for returns to Southern Sudan is the dry season of October through April. During this period, lack of rain ensures road access to rural areas as well as the availability of dry grass, which is used to thatch the roofs of traditional shelters. Since the dry season straddles the calendar year, it is likely that IOM will need the first few months of 2008 to meet the projected 2007 return figures. IOM is structuring returns to maximize dry season access, currently focusing on Central Equatoria, for example, while postponing returns to Juba County which is less obstructed by rain.

¶9. (U) At the end of the current dry season (May 2007), and in line

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with the mid-term review of the U.N.'s Work Plan for Sudan, IOM and partners will review progress, revisit IDP return planning figures, and adjust the projections as necessary.

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SPECIAL IDP GROUPS OF CONCERN  
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¶9. In addition to the 83,000 projected IDP returns, IOM's planning allows for possible assistance to 20,000 spontaneous returns. This includes groups that are determined to be "vulnerable, stranded or distressed," as well as those IDPs that require expedited movement to mitigate inter-communal conflict. IOM will assist with the transportation of these groups and provide non-food relief items to facilitate their return and reintegration.

¶10. (U) On March 20, IOM began transporting a group of 600 Sudanese who had walked into the area around Boma, Eastern Equatoria, from Dima camp in Ethiopia to various locations in Southern Sudan by air.

A precarious security situation near Boma, due to the Sudan People's Liberation Army's disarmament of the Murle militia in Pibor, requires the urgent relocation of this group.

¶11. (U) IOM will soon send a team to Kajo Keji and Nimule to assess the possibility of transporting IDPs from those locations before the rainy season begins in the coming months. About 3,000 IDPs now in Kajo Keji need to return to Yei, Lainya, and Juba counties, a relatively short distance that may fit within the window of the current dry season. In Nimule, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) has registered 3,500 IDPs to return to Bor County. NPA will transport 1,000 of these IDPs under its FY 2006 grant from USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance. IOM will look into the feasibility of transporting the balance before the rains close rural roads to Bor in June.

